



POCKET PC Expert

If you want new software for your Pocket PC and you don't want to pay, you're in luck, says **Steve Clack**. You can get hold of quite a few useful and enjoyable pocket-sized goodies without having to spend a penny



PUSH EMAIL ARRIVES

Push email, a compelling feature of the highly successful BlackBerry handheld, is to appear in the new version of the Pocket PC operating system, Windows Mobile 5.0, which is due for imminent release. Push email allows incoming messages to appear on the handheld almost as soon as the server receives them, much like SMS text messages. A number of push email providers are already working with mobile operators to bring Windows Mobile 5.0-based push email services to handhelds by the end of this year. See www.microsoft.com for details.

TEXT INPUT GETS SPEED BOOST

A new auto-completion product has been released. TextPlus is designed to speed text entry on Pocket PCs. Pocket PCs have a similar feature built in, suggesting words you may be typing as you go to save you completing them, but the built-in software uses a limited US English dictionary that can't be edited. TextPlus has an editable UK English dictionary and the ability to auto-enter phrases as well as words. The software uses a unique frequency-based intelligent search engine to display the words you use most often, increasing the speed of input. Alternative free dictionaries are available for most European languages, with technical dictionaries covering medical terms, military data, Bible terms and more. Dictionaries can be created and edited via a free companion PC-based tool. TextPlus costs \$20 (around £11) from www.smartcell.com and works with the built-in Pocket PC keyboard, Block Recogniser and Letter Recogniser.

4GB SD CARD ON WAY

US-based ATP Electronics has announced plans to release a 4GB card by the end of the year. ATP was the first company to provide a 1GB MMC card in 2003. The new 4GB Secure Digital (SD) card offers a 133x transfer rate, giving read/write speeds of up to 20MB/s. Owners of older Pocket PC devices should note that most SD cards above 1GB aren't compatible with many pre-Windows Mobile 2003 handhelds, and need to check manufacturer specifications before buying. Visit www.atpinc.com for details.

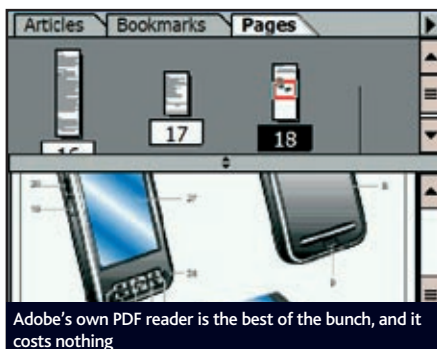
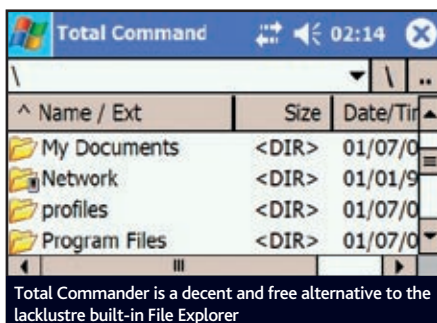
There's lots of great software available for your Pocket PC, but most of it seems to cost money. Luckily while there's not a huge quantity of great free software for the platform, there are a few gems to be had if you know where to look. Here's our round-up of the top pocket freeware.

FANCY FILE MANAGER

Pocket PC's built-in File Explorer is a basic tool, and there are much better alternatives around. The ultimate file manager, Resco File Explorer 2003 from www.resco-net.com costs \$25 (around £14), but if you don't want to pay that, the freeware Total Commander available at www.ghisler.com/ce.htm is a fine choice. It hasn't been updated for almost two years, but it works fine even on the latest Pocket PCs. It allows you to select multiple files and drag and drop them between windows, display and change file characteristics, and Zip your files and folders so they take up less space.

PORTABLE ADOBE

There are a few commercial PDF (Adobe Acrobat) file viewers available for Pocket PC, but the free one just happens to be the best. Just go to www.adobe.com, click the Get Adobe Reader button and select the Pocket PC version. The program hasn't been updated for a while, and there's no high-resolution 640 x 480 pixel VGA mode yet – though it works fine on VGA devices – but it's still the best PDF reader for any handheld platform. When you transfer PDF files to the Pocket PC, Adobe Reader automatically tries to



optimise the text and graphics for the best possible viewing on the small screen.

GRATIS DICTIONARY

The PDA world is simply awash with add-on dictionaries, but most will cost you. WordNetCE (www.ebswift.com/pocketpc/wordnet) uses the open-source WordNet dictionary and thesaurus, which are admirably comprehensive – they currently have 144,000 words. Furthermore, they incorporate UK English as well as US English spellings. You'll need a storage card with at least 35MB of free space to store WordNetCE and the installation process is a little more convoluted than you may be used to, but it's worth the effort. If you ever want to look up a word definition in a hurry, or you're a crossword or word puzzle fan, WordNetCE is a must.

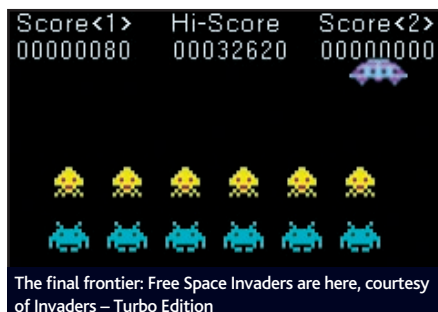
SECURE STASH

The best way to store all your private passwords, PINs and bank account details is to use a dedicated program that encrypts and password-protects this sensitive data. CryptoCard from <http://cablemodem.fibertel.com.ar/pmmx> may not have the polish of commercial alternatives such as eWallet (\$20-\$30, around £11-£16, from www.iliusoft.com), but it uses a similar system to arrange and store data in a variety of categories, with custom fields for everything from credit card details to software licence codes. To create your own categories from scratch, you do have to use a separate PC-based template editor, but you can easily add fields to existing ones and every category includes a note field. There's even a free PC desktop version with which it can sync.

TIME ON YOUR HANDS

Most of the freeware games for Pocket PC lack the slick graphics and quality animations you'll find in the best commercial titles. Invaders – Turbo Edition (www.pocketblasters.com) is hardly the last word in graphics, but it's a faithful clone of the retro classic





Space Invaders arcade game, and just as much fun. There's a two-player as well as single-player mode, and you can control your blaster with buttons or the stylus. As with the original, there's not much variety to the gameplay, so you'll doubtless tire of it before too long. But since it doesn't cost a penny, it's still a fine waste of time.

FANCY FREE

Most PDA software portals include a few freeware items for people on a tight budget, but digging them out can take effort. The www.freewareppc.com site, however, contains nothing but freeware, and it's all for Pocket PC. The quality of the software available varies enormously, so you might have to wade through a fair amount of dross in search of the good stuff. Also, be aware that some of the programs are compatible only with specific versions of the Pocket PC operating system, so you will need to check compatibility with your particular model. **CS**

CONTACT

POCKET PC EXPERT

If there is anything you would like to see covered in *Pocket PC Expert*, please contact us at the address below

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REVIEW PALM EMULATOR

STYLETAP

RATING ★★★★★

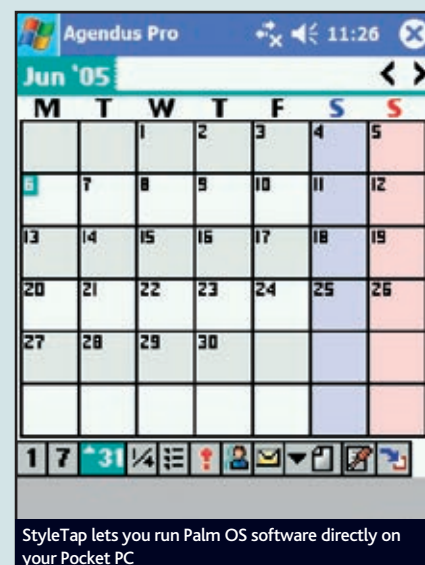
PRICE \$30 (around £17)

DETAILS www.styletap.com

A huge number of Pocket PC owners are ex-Palm users, many of whom would still like to be able to run a few favourite Palm applications that haven't yet been ported to the Windows Mobile platform. StyleTap is a Palm OS emulator that allows you to do exactly that, running native Palm programs and files directly on your Pocket PC.

As with all emulators, it's not quite as good as the real thing. Processor-intensive applications, particularly games, can be sluggish under StyleTap, sometimes to the point of being unusable. Some utility programs that access the operating system at a low level either refuse to work or crash the system, requiring a soft reset. However, at least 90 per cent of the Palm applications we tried worked OK. You can assign a Palm Username to the virtual device, so it's possible to register most of your Palm programs successfully. Unfortunately, this doesn't work for those that tie themselves to a particular device ID.

Data exchange between the two PDA environments is accomplished via a common clipboard. This allows you to copy and paste text freely from Palm to Pocket PC, and vice versa. Palm applications can be launched via StyleTap's own launcher, but they also appear in the standard Pocket PC Applications list and Start Menu. This is a lovely touch that makes it just as quick and easy to run a Palm application as it is to run a Pocket PC one.



StyleTap displays in low-resolution (160x160 pixels) Palm mode only and resizes this to fit the 240 pixel-wide Pocket PC screen, so text and graphics look clunky. Still, everything is readable. Most standard Palm OS functions are present, including the Command Bar and global Find tool, though hacks and conduits aren't supported.

This is an ambitious product with some understandable limitations. But if it works with your particular mix of Palm software, which you can check using the 15-day evaluation version, then you'll probably find it indispensable.

☒ A unique solution to a common requirement

☒ Not compatible with all Palm software

HINTS & TIPS POCKET EXCEL

TOP 5 TIPS FOR USING POCKET EXCEL

Pocket Excel does not fare too well when it comes to synchronising complex spreadsheets from your PC; a lot of your desktop formatting is lost on the handheld, along with any graphs you create. But it is still one of the best PDA-based spreadsheets available and there are plenty of jobs for which it's perfectly suited. Read our top five tips to ensure you get the most from it.

1 You don't need to be a serious number cruncher to make use of Pocket Excel. It's a great way to store lists that you'll want to use regularly, such as a shopping list, a list of films you want to see or the all-important holiday packing list. Lists will never get lost on your Pocket PC. Excel is also useful for keeping secret lists; it has a password-protection feature on the Edit menu.

2 AutoSum is a key feature of desktop Excel and it's in the Pocket version, too. When you want to add together a column or row of numbers, just tap on the spreadsheet cell where you want the total to

appear, then tap on the little blue double-arrow icon at the bottom of the screen to bring up the toolbar. Hit the Σ (sum) icon and Pocket Excel will put a dotted line, known as a marquee, around the list of numbers it thinks you want to add up. If it guessed right, tap the tick icon near the top of the screen to confirm the selection. If not, drag your stylus across the correct range of numbers before selecting the tick.

3 One limitation of Pocket Excel is that it can be difficult to work with big spreadsheets on the small screen. However, you can minimise the amount of scrolling you have to do by keeping your column totals above each list of numbers rather than below. You can lock column and row headings in place using the Split or Freeze Panes commands under the View menu. To understand how these features work, try turning them on and off and seeing what happens when you scroll around the worksheet. Use Find/Replace... under the Edit menu to jump quickly to a cell if you know any part of the text it contains, or Go To... under the

Tools menu to jump straight to a specific cell, such as C5 or N128.

4 A quick tap and hold on just about anything in Pocket Excel will bring up a contextual menu from where you can change features such as cell formatting. If you do this on the grey row or column headings, you can change the formatting of the whole row or column at once, and if you drag the stylus across several, it will format the whole lot together. To apply formatting to the entire sheet, say to change fonts, tap on the grey intersection between row 1 and column A, then tap again to bring up the Format Cells option.

5 Save screen space by adjusting column widths to fit the data within them; tap and hold near the right-hand edge of a grey column header and drag when the cursor changes to a double-headed arrow. Alternatively, double-tap quickly in the same spot to auto-fit to the widest item in the column. You can adjust row heights in a similar fashion.